

News Release

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SBA Names 2005 North Carolina Small Business Person of The Year

CHARLOTTE – The U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) has named Lois Stephenson, President of Building Blocks Child Care & Development Center, in Clayton, the North Carolina Small Business Person of the Year for 2005.

“It is a great pleasure to honor the Small Business Person of the Year and salute the contributions of North Carolina’s small businesses,” said SBA’s North Carolina District Director Lee Cornelison.

“I am honored to receive this recognition,” said Stephenson. I am proud to represent North Carolina as a member of this prestigious group of entrepreneurs from across the United States. “

Small Business Person of the Year winners from 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and Guam will converge on Washington, D.C. in late April to mark the annual celebration of National Small Business Week during *SBA Expo '05*. One of them will be selected as *National Small Business Person of the Year*.

About Lois Stephenson:

President of Building Blocks Child Care & Development Center, Stephenson established her first center in August of 1993, with the help of an SBA 504 Loan, SCORE and SBTDC Small Business Counseling. Building Blocks provides child care for children between the ages of birth through 12 years. Her parents were instrumental in helping her learn fundamental skills of planning, writing, self-discipline, accountability, and creativity. When she married and started her family, she and her husband established a farming business that greatly controlled their lives and taught austerity, cash flow management, budgeting, financial accountability, and hard work. After the heartbreak of the death of her son, Lois became more acutely aware of the vulnerability and fragility of children. On her 51st birthday, she broke ground for the future home of the first Building Blocks Child Care & Development Center Back in 1993, the business started with 10 employees and cared for 58 children. Since then, she has grown her business into a \$3 million per year enterprise with three centers. Building Blocks Child Care & Development Center employs over 90 employees and cares for over 500 children.

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Stephenson used a \$263,000, SBA 504 development loan serviced by Self-Help Ventures Fund to purchase and renovate property for her first of three day care centers. She also received counseling from SCORE and the NC Small Business & Technology Development Center (SBTDC) to help with business and marketing plans.

She is a founding member of the Partnership for Children of Johnston County, former Chairperson of the Board of Directors and former Chairperson of the Child Care Quality Committee, Regional Vice President of the Professional Association of Childhood Education of North Carolina, and member of the Government Relations Committee, as well as a member of the Early Childhood Advisory Committee at Johnston Community College, and was appointed to the North Carolina Child Care Commission by Governor Mike Easley.

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